

## **Dental students providing oral hygiene instruction and supplies to community children**

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### **Abstract:**

Background: Lack of understanding of the need for oral care may be the cause of the high caries rate in inner-city children. IUSD “Kids Club” offers dental students an opportunity to provide oral hygiene instructions and supplies to children around Indianapolis. The members of “Kids Club” travel to elementary schools and after-school programs in the Indianapolis area to educate children and their families. Education is provided in ways which engage the children via interactive puppet-use and stories. The ultimate goal of “Kids Club” is to aid in oral disease prevention by promoting proper oral hygiene.

Methods: In two weeks’ time, “Kids Club” members visited six pre-school classes in Indianapolis to promote proper oral hygiene, oral health care, and better understanding of oral disease. At the beginning of a session, the children were asked six questions regarding oral health care. Oral hygiene education was then performed using interactive puppet play and story-telling. After the oral hygiene demonstration, the same six questions were repeated.

Results: The largest difference in correct answers prior to the lesson and after was 29% (from 71% to 100%). By comparing the responses before and after the lesson, it can be seen that “Kids Club” members are improving the oral health care knowledge of the children. Not only are these lessons positive learning experiences for the children, but they are also positive learning experiences for the “Kids Club” members. By assessing the effectiveness of the oral hygiene lesson given at previous events, members are able to perfect their teaching abilities for future oral hygiene instruction.

Conclusion: By providing oral hygiene education, “Kids Club” members are helping to increase the oral health care knowledge of school-aged children and helping to prevent future disease among the children of the Indianapolis.